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THE ART CRITIC.

DEVOTED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE INTERESTS OF AMERICAN ART.

No. III.

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VOL. I.

THE ART CRITIC.

THE ART CRITIC (published every second month) endeavors to constitute itself the organ of all lovers of Art, who deem the encouragement of American Art by an annual support from the United States Government, necessary, or desirable at least. THE ART CRITIC will devote itself to the propagation of this idea, and the preparation of a plan for its successful execution. To discuss the details of this praiseworthy task (all are invited to submit their opinions, suggestions, etc., in as condensed a form as possible) is the principal object of this paper, while the remaining columns will contain interesting reading matter, with a special effort to chronicle every change and ripple on the surface of artistic endeavor, and to reflect and expose all the influences which develop modern art.

Many subscribers may have their doubts as to whether such a publication can really succeed in America. But it is to be remembered that this publication is a paper of enthusiasm and self-sacrifice (from the editor's point of view) and that he himself will undertake to publish THE ART CRITIC until it has practically accomplished its principal aim, no matter whether it will take one or fifty years.

It is hoped that some people will be so generously interested in this ambitious enterprise as to become share holders in THE ART CRITIC. Shares can be secured for \$100. It entitles the holder to a permanent subscription to THE ART CRITIC and a voice in its administration and the execution of its plans.

THE ART CRITIC will always strive to attain the highest standard, it will begin humbly but steadily improve. A series of illustrations of masterpieces of American art will begin with the fourth number.

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C. SADAKICHI HARTMANN, Editor,
109 Worcester St., Boston, Mass.

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The Art Critic will publish 5000 copies at each future issue.

A LECTURE ON AMERICAN ART.

Written originally for the Boston Art Club and delivered before the Kit Kat Club, New York, and Sketch Club, Philadelphia.

Instead of beginning with the conventional "ladies and gentlemen," I apply the term "art-lovers," undoubtedly the most appropriate way of addressing this assemblage, which consists, I presume, entirely of art-lovers.

Well then, art-lovers, several artists and I believe, members of the Art Club, have repeatedly asked me not to allow the opportunity to pass, should I be called upon to deliver a lecture before the club, to pitch into the unprofessional members and give them what they designate, if I do not err — with a word beginning with h — and terminating with —ll.

Now I must confess that, after accepting your kind invitation, and being desirous also of pleasing my artist friends, I am placed in rather an embarrassing position. But, supposing I agree with the said artists, what would be the use of coming upon this platform if I were not to express my opinion simply, straightforwardly, to the point.

During my hour's speech — I believe that is the time allowed me — I shall permit myself many a sarcastic remark, but, rest assured, not only at the expense of the unprofessional members but of the artists as well. I, therefore, apologize beforehand for whatever I may say. I do not wish to hurt anyone's feelings but I would rather hurt someone's feelings than be unjust to art.

Art to me is no mere pastime, not merely the most important of educational powers, but something just as sacred as religious and domestic duties.

This merely as an introduction !

"The unique experience through which America has passed during the last century — developing within a few generations from a colonial settlement into a nation which stands almost first in agricultural and industrial achievements in the noonday glare of nineteenth century competition — is known to all, but the trials to which she has been subjected and the obstacles she has had to overcome in the path of progress she has chosen for herself, are easily overlooked by those who stand aside from the rush of business life, and overestimated by those who feel themselves in the midst of it. Never has a nation accomplished so much in so short a time. The American plutocracy can well afford to boast: 'Is our nation not rich, busy and strong?' Well, it is only a question of time when it will be richer, busier and stronger."

But this development of the material aspects to such dwindling heights was naturally exposed to an abrupt suddenness. The aims of the day were so urgent and all-absorbing that there was no interest left for the embellishment of life, at least not more than comfort and necessity demanded. The encouragement of art, the importance of which is, I hope, now being gradually, if too slowly recognized, was for a whole century sorely neglected by those who regarded the commercial prospect of our country with such anxiety. Our proprietors of railroads, our bank directors, stockholders of trusts have but little sympathy and little use for paintings and statuary, except it were for investment's sake. Here more than elsewhere modern competition has a tendency to crush the talents of young artists and sink their ambition into a dead uniformity of mechanical machine-like productions.

These are very deplorable facts! Because, as much as other nations admire our agricultural and industrial development, they have but a pitiful smile or an indifferent shrug of the shoulders for our artistic endeavors. In Europe they still consider the pictures of Millet or Böcklin more important for the welfare of the human soul than Singer's sewing-machines or Hammond's type-writers. Europeans have not yet arrived at that point of perfection at which they could get along without art.

They would rather comprehend a society without steam engines, telegraphs and telephones, without newspapers and yacht races and the thousand marvels which progress has strewn in its triumphal path, but they are not wise enough to understand a society without the elevating influence of art.

But, happily it can be said, our large cities seem also to contain a number of far-seeing individuals who have realized this deficiency in our social system and are willing to remedy it by establishing art clubs.

This Art Club, for instance, "devoted to the advancement of knowledge and a love for art," as one can read in the constitution, enjoys a membership of the wealthiest citizens in Boston, and, therefore, is capable of doing an infinite amount of good.

It has been existing for more than twenty years.

Following the luminous example of American commerce, what wonderful work must it not have accomplished in that space of time! Surely it has seized every opportunity to beautify its beloved city. Only look at the Back Bay Park. It threatens to become a serious rival to the New York Central Park. What sublime efforts has it not made to embellish all public places with appropriate monuments and statues! Columbus before the Cathedral, the Crispus Attuck monument on the Common, and little Lief Ericsson of Commonwealth avenue, watching the progress of landscape gardening in the Back Bay Park! How many donations and collections of pictures have not been given to the Museum of Fine Arts! How many artists, *young, talented, half-starving* beginners in particular, must not have profited by its generous art patronage. To what a delightful height must not its persistent labor have succeeded in developing the art feeling in Boston in general, and when I see them at the Saturday luncheons, *I am not surprised that they endeavor to enjoy themselves, having worked so hard for twenty years.*

So I thought, at least, when I came to this city for the first time.

But I must have suffered from a cataract in my eyes at that time, and since it has been removed I see less cheerful though not less amusing pictures.

Of course the members of the Art Club patronize art; I have myself seen one of the officers visiting the exhibition of one of the best artists in town. He entered the studio, walked quickly around the room, looking upwards and downwards, as he passed along and then walked straight out again. You see that it was a stern duty for that gentleman to visit the artist's exhibition. The same sense of duty drives visitors to Paris and London into the galleries there. They walk through them, look here and there at canvases, and at last stand in admiration before some picture, because the figure resembles a grand-aunt or uncle of theirs. How highly flattered the muses feel at such appreciation must be left to some modern Lucian to describe.

The topography of Boston is such that with little effort the Hub could be made the most beautiful city in the States. One night, a few years ago while visiting some friend on the top floor of the Hotel Brunswick, I felt this most keenly.

There to the right lay Beacon Hill with its quaint old streets, and the huge State House; right before me I caught a glimpse of the Charles River that could be transformed into as interesting a stretch of water as, for instance, the Alster in Hamburg. And all around me I saw long avenues that reminded me, though rather sparsely lit with gas, of the magnificent thoroughfares of Paris; and this illusion could have been realized,—and Boston beautified to a rare degree merely by doubling or trebling the number of lamp posts on every square. *Why Boston could be made one of the most picturesque cities in the world!* Instead of this, they did away with the few lamp posts they had, put up one of those ugly

poles for electric lights here and there and encased the city in a wire netting for the electric cars.

Unartistic monuments have cropped up everywhere like weeds. Almost as plentifully as bad art schools. Consider the terrible amount of unnecessary expenditure! The only way to mend these mistakes would be to establish a subscription for the removal of the statues. I am — at least I hope so, — about the poorest man in this assembly, but I assure you that I would be the first to support such a movement to the full extent of my purse.

Twenty years of hard work for the advancement of art and yet — the members of the Boston Art Club don't know a good picture when they see it. One day — it was told me — the committee was in great trouble. They had found a picture of a young, nude girl with a vase on her shoulder from which the water was flowing. Nobody knew what to make of it; the discussion went on for hours; some of them argued that it was the copy of an old master; others that it was the work of some new master; a few thought that it might be the original of a French painting, but none arrived at the truth, which, however, they did not take to heart very much, as they often adjourned to partake of a luncheon, served to them at the expense of the Art Club. It was a copy of "La Source" by Ingres, a picture which, for its manifold reproductions and art historical fame, should be known to all with any pretence to a knowledge of art. A remarkable art club, indeed, which does not contain a single art connoisseur among its committee!

But this was probably because the picture represented a nude, because Bostonians are still in that half barbaric state which objects to the nude, the supreme standard and type of all beauty, as a fit subject in art. New England did not send a single nude to the Fair, and the Boston Art Museum — which by the way promises to become one of the best industrial art museums in the country — avoids the exhibition of nudes on account of public prejudice, so that painters of the nude like H. O. Walker are very wise in leaving Boston for a more broadminded field.

And yet theatrical managers have assured me that there are few cities as fond of leg shows as Boston. *This is rather a little inconsequent, I fear.*

In the present state of affairs, however, the nude must hide herself. Oh Rochegrosse, may your "Fall of Babylon" — at present exhibited in New York — never come to Boston, for you would put us to the trouble of sending a fashionable dressmaker to receive it. We, who can tolerate the display of every species of vulgar stage costume to stare at us from shop windows and empty walls, cannot look without a blush at the revelations of genius. It would prostrate us. And is it not highly characteristic that the only decent posters ever seen on the Boston fences, I mean those of "Babes in the Wood," after Chéret, were prohibited by the aldermen, not because they are such pruders themselves — you only need to visit the State House to see what pleasant gentlemen they are — but because they followed the public spirit.

Do not imagine, however, that I would make the foolish attempt to better the world. It would be a vain attempt indeed. King Solomon already was aware of that.

What I say is intended merely as suggestions; some will profit by them, and perhaps try to act accordingly; the rest will either be amused or bored by my lecture, perhaps tell me after it is over that they have greatly enjoyed it, and there it will rest, the nude hiding herself as before.

Or will some one set a good example and offer a prize for the best nude in the next Art Club exhibition? I wish that my lecture to-night would have some practical result, I do not get paid for it, but I really think somebody should benefit by it. If these bad times do not allow you to offer a two thousand dollar prize, offer one of \$500, and if that also does not suit you, at least subscribe to my art magazine. *If you want to do anything do it now — begin to-morrow.*

Let us return to our subject. Taste in art matters is exposed to the same abrupt changes as fashion. Once W. M. Hunt was the fashionable painter in Boston, now it is Tarbell. And just as little as one can explain satisfactorily why ladies this year wear puffed sleeves and seven gored skirts, could one give a definite explanation why Tarbell is now the king of Boston painters.

The Germans ascribe all these changes to the "Zeitgeist," i. e., spirit of the time, and history tells us that it has always been so.

The runs of a quarto by a Guido de Arezzo strike despair on modern ears, and a modern opera would probably have brought despair to the ear of Guido de Arezzo. We laugh today at Allston's pictures which pleased our grandfathers, and our grandfathers call us crazy for admiring Monet. The most respectable young lady in the time of Louis XV. went more décolletée than would any lady without principles and prejudice to-day. Whereas the most frivolous girl of the Rococo period would have repudiated even the suspicion of dancing a galop.

So you see nothing can be forced upon a community, it has to develop gradually, slowly, and, I suppose, in Boston very slowly. But surely one has a right to expect something of a place like this, where the richest and most influential men of the time come in contact with some of our best artists. At present it is merely, at least as far as I can see, to have a place to talk shop, to gossip about stocks and have a good time, and occasionally when some one takes the trouble to give a lecture, to lend a kind ear.

Should I ever have the pleasure of appearing before you again, I hope I shall be able to report some progress, but until then allow me to think of this club, whenever I am obliged to remember its kind hospitality, as the "Saturday Luncheon Club," if you will permit me to express myself so.

But joking aside! Neither they themselves nor the artists, nor art in general profit by such proceedings.

No, no, more serious work has to be done by those people who profess to be interested in art, in the development of an American art. Or we will always have pictures and statues of foreign artists decorating the walls and niches of our private houses and museums.

Of course there is another side to the question. Although the Art Club could have done much more for Boston art, it has after all done something. The artists may have a right to grumble, but they should also consider that not every lady in Beacon street can be a Miss Wolff. They should take into consideration how they would have got along if the Art Club had not done even the little it has done.

There are dozens of members who hardly ever visit the Art Club, and yet have paid their entrance fee and cheerfully pay their assessments, twice the amount of those of the artist members, in order to give the artists a comfortable club house, a gallery to exhibit their pictures in and an opportunity to sell them.

So they do something after all, and probably would do a great deal more, if the artists *understood better how to advance their own interests.*

And this brings us to the serious question, have we really a national American art worthy of encouragement?

Can we doubt it with such names as Charles Sprague Pearce, Walter Gay, McEwen, David Neal, Toby Rosenthal, Melchers, Karl Mahr, Dannat, Bridgman, Weeks, Ridgway Knight, Stewart, Harrison, and above all else Sargent and Whistler. Splendid names! But in what way are they American? In their technique? Surely not. In the selection of their subjects? No.

They have nothing whatever in common with our national spirit, and these are our best names, mentioned generally where there is question of American art. So many of our artists are foreigners, living abroad; and those who return to this country bring a foreign technique with them, either Munich or Paris, and it takes them half their lives to free themselves from its influence.

Why then should these Franco-Americans be especially encouraged?

A man who has worked hard to accumulate a fortune which allows him the luxury of works of art, wants to get pleasure out of it in his own way, and it cannot be expected of him that he will buy a certain picture which he does not care for, merely because it is the work of an American. It is in human nature that he does it out of selfish motives, either because it really pleases him, or for mere vanity's sake, in order to pose as a connoisseur, in some cases to patronize a favorite artist. For my part I must honestly confess that I wonder at the number of pictures painted in Boston that are sold. Surely three-quarters of the pictures of our Art Club exhibitions are not fit to be bought. The young artist is therefore to blame himself when he complains that he finds no sympathy at home and sells no pictures. He returns from Europe with a dozen

trunks full of sketches, mostly schoolwork, nothing really original, and then expects that carriages will come rolling before the door, that the elevator will never be at rest on account of the many visitors, and that he can dispose of his pictures for any price he asks. And if somebody by chance buys a picture of his, he thinks that that person, after all, is a true appreciator of art. But I am just of the opposite opinion, that the buyer knows as little of art as this desk or else he would go and buy some better art for his money.

No, American artists must come up to a higher standard if they wish to compete with the works on the European market.

They make the excuse that art is cosmopolitan, and, therefore, not bound to any country. Of course not, but it does not consist either in plagiarism and imitation, which they practise. If they can do original work like Gari Melchers or Charles Sprague Pearce, one might let it pass, it won't make them immortal, nevertheless it is good art. But all those paintings that look like copies of French pictures are valueless. They are smitten with decay while their colors are still wet. They must perish, they *will* perish. Bury them out of sight and let them make place for better because more original creations.

And the American artists, who talk about money like business men and complain that they do not realize as much as business men, let them use their own judgment. Surely they will understand that, as long as they adapt and adopt the methods and subjects of European artists, they cannot expect anybody to buy their pictures, for the purchaser can obtain the same thing for the same price, of a much better quality, on the other side, with the name of a great artist in addition, *which is surely no small temptation to society men and picture buyers.* Paint American life and the money will also roll into your coffers; if it does not, it is not your fault at least.

Let us imitate the Greeks, the Italians, the Dutch in their love and appreciation of art, but not in their works of art. We can not go back, we cannot recreate the old. Let us not care for old forms, but do away with them without scruple. In the *abundance of our youthful energy*, let us believe that we can surpass old laws of beauty and create new ones. Modern life has modern demands and needs a modern art. We have to search in our own day and in our immediate surroundings to solve the enigma of future American art. And if we have enough *firminess, vitality, inborn ability and lasting qualities* in our present life, it will flourish by sheer necessity. Nor is there any reason why future generations should have all the good of it. Why not also allow the present, which should be nearest and dearest to us — as it actually is in all other things — benefit by it.

But in order to be pioneers of that, which the history of American art will remember most thankfully, we must absorb our national life; be true Americans, inwardly and outwardly, practically as well as spiritually.

Copying can never create a style; an artist or a school can not be successfully imitated, as little as one can make a rose or a pear by chemistry; such things can only grow according to natural laws.

All the great artists confirm this fact.

Did not the color of Titian reflect all the commercial glory of the golden age of Venice; the luxurious, pleasure-loving Venetians in gorgeous vestments in marble pillared halls, the ever-changing atmospheric effects that weave their color dreams over the city of the lagoons?

Rembrandt was a genuine Dutchman, not only in his private life, but also in his artistic work. The activity, love of liberty, emotional depth and simplicity of the Dutch character reflect strongly in *Rembrandt's* work, and these are qualities which American art of to-day would need indeed.

And does not every canvas of *Velasquez* conjure up before us the Escorial and Madrid of the seventeenth century with its plumed Kings and booted Knights, with all its fanatic devotion, glowing pomp and sinister chivalry, as well as the brown, sunburnt plains and the rugged Sierras of Spain!

And then take *Dürer*. Does not every line remind us of quaint old Nuremberg with its gabled houses, its sculptured fountains, its Gothic churches its carved doorways, and its background of meadowland rising up into the Pegnitz and the blue Franconian mountains? *The true artist cannot be local enough.*

Our human minds can comprehend but a few things thoroughly in a lifetime. And one must know a thing thoroughly in order to paint it well. If a man wants to become a sheep painter like Mauve, or Zeigel, or T. A. S. Monks of Winthrop, he has to devote a lifetime to the study of that subject. True enough an artist may, without further study give us a picturesque view of a group of sheep, but he will not be able to give us the real character, the soul of these animals with all its peculiarities, etc. *Henner*, who devotes his whole life to painting the nude in a peculiar twilight atmosphere, deserves unlimited praise, for in painting that one thing well he proves himself to be a truer artist than those who try their hands at everything and often do it badly.

None know better than the Japanese how long it takes before one can understand one's subject thoroughly and before one is able to express what one understands in a simple, artistic manner. *Hokusai*, who gives us the most correct representations of life in Japan before the introduction of modern ideas, wrote in his seventy-fifth year these humorous and heartfelt words: "Since my sixth year a peculiar mania took possession of me to draw all sorts of things. By my fiftieth year I had published quite a number of works of every possible description, but none were to my satisfaction. Real work began with me only in my seventieth year. I was seventy-five when the real understanding for nature awoke within me. I therefore hope that at eighty I might have arrived at a certain power of intuition

which will develop further until my ninetieth year, so that at the age of one hundred I can say that my intuition is thoroughly artistic, and should it be granted me to live one hundred and ten years I hope that a vital and true comprehension of nature may radiate from every line and dot.

You see Hokusai is more modest than some of our American artists.

But, to return to our argument, only the living has an imperious right to be. And what part of this big world should we comprehend better than that in which we were born and brought up, which surrounds us daily for the largest part of our lives.

And as our country spreads over such a vast area, as the development of the American race is everywhere going on, and as our country offers varying aspects in the South, West and East, our art, more than that of any other country, is dependent on provincialism and localism.

Let the Westerners paint their plains and sierras, let the Southerners paint the tropical vegetation and the passions and chivalry of the South. Let the Philadelphia painters depict Pennsylvania scenery and life. The highways of quaint, picturesque Munch Chunk and the mines of Pittsburg, with their huge chimneys, black mountains of debris, and long trains of coal carts, have never furnished a masterpiece of American art as yet. Let the New York artists depict New York scenery and life. It is a gigantic city which holds its own even when compared with London, Paris, Rome, or St. Petersburg. And let Boston artists depict New England life. I shall not try to make any comments on the merits of *New England*, as they are so manifold that it would take hours to do them justice. Then every school will develop striking qualities, and characteristics of its own, and, all together, realize what is to-day merely a hope and a dream:

A NATIONAL AMERICAN ART.

These are the clues which may guide the young artist and help him to make a way for himself through the labyrinth of imitation and uncertain striving for originality, which surrounds the art of to-day.

As important as the technical part of the painter's craft may be, it is after all subordinate to some big idea which must stimulate art in order to render it great.

The everlasting complaint is: There is no atmosphere in America. Pshaw! The true artist creates his own atmosphere wherever he goes, even if he possessed but a bare room with four white-washed walls, and were too poor to buy his paint, he could decorate those walls with the color of imagination. He will be enough in himself. Of course there is some difference between Rome and Boston, between Paris and Philadelphia. True enough the Boulevard des Italiens is more suggestive than Tremont street. A run through the Luxembourg can teach us more than the picture gallery in Boston, and there is no doubt that our artists can

meet more congenial spirits in the Boulevard Montparnasse and in the Blumenstrasse, Munich, than at home.

But there are other incentives that rise everywhere from the eternal principles of nature. Have we no flowers in America? Are not our women beautiful? And are not the sorrows and joys of human life very much the same o'er the world?

Nor can they excuse themselves with the complaint that they find no lofty examples here, artistic inspirations may not flow quite as easily here on this side of the ocean.

But let it be remembered that when Michael Angelo with sublime fury painted the history of man during six long years, until the habit of looking upwards had so grown upon him that he could not hold his head straight, and his contemporaries, the greatest painters perhaps the world ever saw, could hardly follow the flights of his fancy, the atmosphere of the eternal city with its grandiose ruins and art treasures must have appeared as dull to him as Cambridgeport did to Washington Allston seventy-five years ago.

And in what does atmosphere consist?

In such surroundings as are apt to afford recreations that are at the same time stimulating in an æsthetic sense.

We have, for instance, the new library which I admired so much, and the Industrial Art Museum a better gallery than most European cities of the size of Boston can boast of; they are directly at your hand. If artists would learn thoroughly what these have to teach to the rest of the world they could add little to their knowledge. But it is a fact that the Art Museum is seldomer visited by artists than anybody else, although they have free admission; and the art books in the Public Library and Athenæum would be covered with an inch of dust if they were read by none but artists.

Nevertheless, in our very midst there are a number of artists working, perhaps unconsciously, at the development of a national art. These are the pioneers of a great cause and the nation owes them an infinitude of thanks.

Thanks, above all, to our artistic wood engravers who have overcome the formal limitations of their profession, and, with the assistance of printers, paper-makers and ink manufacturers, have amplified and raised it to such an extent that American wood engraving has become superior to that of all other countries, an art in itself.

Just as actors interpret the lines of a dramatist, so wood-engraving interprets masterpieces of painting to the general public. The names Whitney, Juengling, Kingsley, King, Cole, Johnson, Kruell, Davis, French, Lindsay should, have a proud ring in the history of American art.

Thanks also to our illustrators, who by sheer necessity have got on the right road and every day discover new, picturesque features in our cities and surroundings, giving us faithful or humorous photographs of our society life. Puck and Life gener-

ally contain more of the American character than two or three rooms of a New York Academy exhibition. Look at the street scenes of Childe Hassam, they represent American life. He tries to discover in the thoroughfares of our large cities, the same picturesqueness as in the avenues of Paris, and do not the simplest scenes of Central Park by W. M. Chase represent that artist's best and probably most lasting work?

Thanks to the ancestors of American art, such men as Benjamin West, Washington Allston, Gilbert Stuart.

Thanks to William Hunt, a lonesome wanderer in the dreamland of genius, and Fuller whose canvases radiated the very soul of New England life.

Thanks to the so called Hudson River school who has courageously striven for more than half a century to give this continent an art, of which both the body and soul should show genuine American characteristics.

Thanks to our landscape painters — equal to those of any country, even to the Barbizon school — who, being obliged to make their studies out of doors, preserve in their pictures, even if darkened by a foreign technique, the general character of what they see, which is of course strictly American.

Allow me to use this occasion to say a few words about Albert Bierstadt, that sublime botcher, I believe also a member of this club — don't laugh — I admire him. I know there are a dozen of students in our Art Museum who can paint all around him. I know his pictures look of late very much like chromo lithographs. But it was he who revealed in every picture, in large perspective views, some of the thousand beauties that our country contains. No matter whether he be a botcher, and a politician besides, mediocre in drawing and coloring, without the air and light of impressionism or the nobility and poetry of French landscapists, in the selection of his subjects, he is an artist superior to all of them, who reminds us more than once of the classic landscapes of Claude Lorraine besides being strictly American in character. Our western scenery with its clear atmosphere which preserves every aerial gradation, making it possible to see patches of snow over the forest line of mountains at a distance of ten miles, should make perspective views one of the striking features of American landscape painting.

I naturally do not mean to indicate that an artist who does not paint American subjects is less of an artist for that reason, as for instance Marcus Waterman and T. M. Gaugengigl who are, in reality, two of the best artists Boston ever saw. In display of imagination and as a painter of sunlight, Waterman has few equals anywhere, while nobody can deny Gaugengigl's cleverness in composition and minute execution.

But they do not assist us in building up an American art, which would be characteristic of our country.

Such artists are, however, not lacking, even in

Boston. To mention but a few, Tompkins, Hamilton, Dean, Ross Turner, Enneking, etc.

Don't think that I am getting too personal. As long as one praises I believe it is allowed even in Boston.

In these men lurks the beginning of a national art, very faint of course, but palpable nevertheless.

And higher than anybody else in Boston from this special point of view I would place Tarbell. His very desire to see things as they really are without emotional or intellectual embellishment, his very indifference or incapacity for painting anything except common-places with which he is thoroughly familiar, makes the selection of his subject strictly American—his girls are American girls, no mistake about that—and also his technique might have American qualities, if he remained true to himself, without paying attention to Zorn and other fashionable technicians. At all events he is an artistic personality of some strength, as he is making a school whose aspirations would be very commendable to follow, if it were not still better to find a road of one's own. Messrs. Benson, De Camp, Churchill, Wagner, etc., should remember that originality and individualism are the strongest factors for any artistic success.

Let each individual cultivate his dominating qualities, let him strive for that most suitable to his abilities, let him employ his aptitude and activity in those directions for which they were designed, and we will soon have a national American Art.

And these future artists what will they paint? They will test their talents in new realms. They know that the country contains thousands of scenes ready to yield their beauty to him who has the courage to be original. They will give views of the characteristic scenes and the human activity in our cities, on our rivers and sea coasts, in our forests and fields. They will explore for instance our great lakes: grand, mysterious Lake Superior, beautiful, seagreen Michigan, blue, romantic, wild, solitary Huron, historical Erie and grey, placid Ontario.

They will depict the interminable prairies with their pure breath, their loneliness, and their primitive prodigality; when the first rays of sunlight, or broad twilight shadows from the distant mountains steal over it; in all the moods of nature, in moonlight, and storm, in snow and summer's heat. Just as the ocean employs hundreds and hundreds of marine painters in her service, the prairies also could occupy the minds of hundreds of painters, for the prairies are as great an emblem of infinity as the ocean.

They will reveal to us the grandeur of the Rocky Mountain scenery. The mining towns, at the foot of the mountains, ranches and vineyards on reddish brown hills, with the mountains in ever varying groups as background; the gigantic, quaintly shaped formations of rocks broken by river canons and gorges with motionless lakes; the sombre green of the forests of pine, the ragged pinnacles of rock,

and the vast glacial formations with their silent white peaks of ice.

They will represent our majestic rivers, above all else, the Mississippi, that mighty sweeping flood, its vague outlines banked with magnolia swamps and primeval forests of cypress trees, revealing at all times a grandeur of nature created to inspire and furnish an eternal studio for poets and artists.

Everywhere we find material for pictures, from the downs, sand-drifts and windmills of Long Island, to the Yellowstone Lake, whose beautiful shore lines should render painters wild with enthusiasm; from St. Augustine with its Spanish architectonic reminiscences to the fantastic rocks of Southern Colorado, which tells the story of the architecture of nature.

I will not weary you, however, with an enumeration which would be endless.

And if the scenery is so vast and suggestive, how can our life and habits be void of picturesque elements.

The day will come—it is not far off—when we will grow tired of Dutch hoods and Brittany aprons, of models in French uniforms and mediæval costumes.

Are our laborers less picturesque than the French? Why then can we not produce a Raffæli or Carrière Belleuse?

Are our Longshore men less characteristic than the pilots and portermen of Concarneau or Etappes?

So we also will have our Hacquettes and Renoufs. Perhaps have them already.

Are our children not equally as interesting as those of Paris? Perhaps more so because less precious. So we will have a Tryphème and a Geoffroy.

And are our Western farmers and cowboys less suggestive than the everlasting peasants of Brittany and Normandy? Why then should we not have a Roll, L'Hermitte or Millet?

Is not the society life of our modern Athens mature, vital and comical enough to inspire some exquisite genre pictures like those of Vibert, Defregger, Knaus, Vautier? Many a time when strolling through the streets of our great cities, and watching she bustle and activity on our wharves, depots and tores, I wonder that these things have never been painted.

Only to cite one instance. Look at our factory girls going to work in the gray calm atmosphere of morning, walking with a brisk step and healthy cheek (quite a contrast to the ladies who invade the streets a few hours later to go shopping), a real type of American womanhood, by far healthier morally than that of most countries. Why then do not our painters give us such pictures. Another chance for an art patron to offer a prize!

And then our literature, is it not rich enough to serve as a stimulant to all arts? There is enough to satisfy every taste.

If you are an idealist, a dreamer, a mysticist,

open the poems of Poe, the poet of night, but a night of cloudless skies overarching a beautiful garden, where fairy-like beings float among large white flowers, and many colored lanterns, lit by the caprice of his imagination, hang swaying from stalk to stalk, while meteors shoot across the strange nocturnal scene. If you listen, you will hear soft singing, like cataracts heard in the distance, endlessly beautiful and suggestive, mysterious and powerful, which has found an echo all over the globe, has been imitated by many a clever songsmith, and given rise by the help of Baudelaire to the French school of *Symbolism*.

If you are a romanticist read our greatest novelist, Hawthorne. Every one of his pages will stir your souls with some emotion, awaken some memory, joy or sorrow, some aspiration, some great thought.

If you are a realist read W. Whitman, that great democratic spirit, who had all the universe for his country, whose muse embraced our republic in rugged, rhapsodic lines, who related the most minute peculiarities of life and soared to the most sublime regions of the spirit. Never did the New World produce a poet so independent and individual. He knew but little of the refinement and technicalities of art, he did not believe in abstract beauty, but every page of "Leaves of Grass" and "Specimen Days," contains innumerable inspirations ready to burst their bounds and overflow imagination. The sooner Walt Whitman becomes a household book in every artistic family, the better for our American art.

And what American's breast does not swell with pride and enthusiasm when the history of our country opens its pages of blood spotted chronicles, from those remote times when the Norsemen first set foot on Rhode Island to our days! What a wealth of honest hard labor and enthusiastic heroism, which should furnish American artists with material enough for a thousand years to come!

It is absurd that America is spoken of as being without a history. Is not the Secession War more apt to evoke elevating emotions than the memories of the mighty past of other countries? One of the few wars in the whole history of the world that had its justification!

This gives me another occasion to address a few words to the unprofessionals, many of whom undoubtedly remember the war with all its glorious victories, its dreary marches, the horrible scenes on battlefields, in prisons and hospitals.

You and your fathers did not lack patriotism at that time. You here in New England contributed more than any other State. You did not only give money. No, your wives and daughters did everything to help the soldiers, making bandages and nursing in the hospitals. Still more—you gave your own sons. You still remember when the announcement of victory was followed by a list of wounded and slain and there was not one family, not one homestead in New England, that did not weep the loss of some relative, some dear friend.

And why did you make that sacrifice? To deliver another despised, humiliated, degenerated race from bondage, to *elevate humanity*.

Well, then, do the same now, elevate humanity! Render your nation more glorious still by the encouragement of art, and open to thousands, thirsting for æsthetic enjoyment, the opportunities of beautifying their lives. You do so much for free education throughout the country, why then not add art education to it, which is considered the highest phase of education in all other countries?

The United States spends over three hundred millions every year for general expenses; why not add one million more? You will not feel the one-eighth of one per cent. very much, yet it will do infinite good, as it will raise the nation's standard in the eyes of the world. Help to accomplish this.

But as long as patriotism is considered an unnecessary expenditure of force in times of peace, as long as members of Congress can announce in public speech that the United States treasury cannot spare one cent for the solving of artistic problems, so long will foreigners instead of native artists supply our artistic demands and the Americans will fall short of being really a great nation.

However, as long as the government does not change its position from an *infernal* to a *paternal* government, art patronage must come from individual nobility and heroic citizenship. And therefore, I say to the unprofessional members of this club, assist the artists in their struggles. Be lenient to them, be generous! Above all else be patriotic!

Your country has produced great scientists, great statesmen, great writers, great thinkers, great actors and singers, and it depends on your generosity and patronage to give your country great painters, great sculptors and great architects.

No great manifestations of genius in art have occurred in this race as yet. But encourage art in the right way, cease, in unpardonable inconsequence to praise your country as the most advanced on earth, and yet go annually to Europe to patronize foreign works of art. Encourage home talents and you will see that even generations brought up on poor Richard's maxims did not succeed in exterminating the artistic temperament altogether, that great artists can rise even from this inartistic soil.

When Wagner wrote his grandiose operas, whose legendary heroes demanded a development of voice and histrionic powers hitherto unknown to the singers in *Italian Opera*, there rose suddenly two or three dozens of the greatest singers that the world ever saw. The same it will be with American art. As soon as there will be demand for great pictures, there will be painters great enough to paint them.

And to the artists I also say: Be lenient to your surroundings. Be generous. Above all else be patriotic.

Hold together! Unite your strength! Put an end to professional rivalries which you practise at present. At present you work in cliques. There is the St. Botolph Club: Vinton, Allen, Gaugengigl, one

little set. There in the St. Botolph studios : Tarbell, Benson, de Camp with satellites, the Tarbellites. Then Waterman, Caliga and the Paint and Clay Club members, another little set, all jealous of each other, wasting their energies in running down their brother artists, fighting for themselves and not for arts. Why, such proceedings are infamous.

Half of our artists are not aware that they owe a moral responsibility to art and until they change they are to be considered more at fault than the laity, scarcely deserving to be encouraged.

Go to Europe and study, instead of lines and values, the sentiment and comradeship that prevails among the artists in Munich and Paris. Also they are human of course, but they go hand in hand like friends, and not like highwaymen who are ready to cut each other's throats at the first opportune moment.

Artists of America, follow their example. Boston artists, combine your forces. And as this club is the most important art club in New England, rise to a man, join it and fight for your rights.

Be true artists !

If we can do very little in the present to better our circumstances, let us fix our eyes on the future ; let us prepare that if we can. Each man may do something in his own little sphere.

At the present time, face to face with the coming century, which, I hope, for the artist's sake, will be as much an age for art as this has been for invention, we should feel more ardent sympathy or more curiosity, at least, than resentment or personal alarm ; and, indeed, we may perish and all the artistic efforts of our generation with us, if we are only found fit to fill up the chasm over which those following us may march towards the goal !

Let us prepare a future in which art will show herself, as in the past, a worthy leader in the great cause of social and moral improvement, and thus maintain and justify the position claimed for her of being "in no ordinary sense of the word a matter of public interest."

FORTY-NINTH EXHIBITION OF THE BOSTON ART CLUB

(Written on Varnishing Day.)

One hundred and twenty-eight artists are represented. One hundred and ninety-one pictures out of about six hundred were accepted. The jurors were modest enough to send only seventeen pictures, when they could have sent twenty-seven.

Before speaking of individual work, I cannot resist the pleasure of putting into words a few general impressions I received at this morning's visit.

The repertory of Boston painters, as it appears in the "Saturday Luncheon Club," seems to be guided

by the common sense conception and common sense taste of the spectators and eventual purchasers. There are (fortunately) no pictures that need a commentary ; they can all be understood by everybody ; in the majority of cases, moreover, there is nothing to be understood. To solve the meaning of a few cows on a hillside, or a posing girl demands no mental effort. The times of pictorial dreams and prophecies à la Hunt and Fuller are over. Our painters write their prose in values, and their poetry in colors, merely to repeat nature. And do they paint reality? Yes, if reality were so easily fixed on a canvas ! They honestly endeavor, however, to select their subjects from inspirations within the reach of all. Painting in the "Saturday Luncheon Club" does not seem to represent the ideas of the artists, but rather the ideas of the laymen. Then how to the deuce can they avoid making art a collection of family paper illustrations? Well, they don't either, on the contrary, it looks as if they enjoyed the fact that it is made so easy for them.

Nevertheless, never forget that to repeat nature is their motto, which is very meritorious to say the least ; yet one shortcoming is attached to it : if two or three painters paint the same subject, and they invariably do, it becomes very difficult to decide about the authorship. In order to become prominent, then, there only remains one remedy, which can be employed by none but remarkable technicians, i. e., to rescue their individuality by employing an out-of-the-ordinary handwriting in copying nature. Though a picture may be nothing but a piece of reproduced nature or humanity, an artistic individuality, by making its flourishes of brushwork over it, can attain mastership. This is the realism of virtuosos, *en vogue*, at present, about St. Botolph Street.

Mr. Benson's "Head" is the best example of the "dashy style" in the gallery ; it is brilliant, effervescent ; yes, there is no doubt that Mr. Benson can paint. If he continues as he has begun he will one day be in possession of all the technical tricks and mysteries known to the evolution of modern painting. It is one of the few pictures in the gallery I would care to own, although it clearly shows that Mr. Benson met Mr. A. Zorn and his pictures at the World's Fair.

Not quite as attractive as usual, though spontaneous as ever, is Tarbell's "Winter Girl." The left hand resting on the hip looks to me very much like a new glove, widened by a stretcher and then filled with sawdust ; but I may be mistaken in this as in my opinion that Tarbell is the more substantial and